

(Washington, DC) Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) made the following statement in response to President Obama's State of the Union address:

"One year ago, President Obama spoke of economic recovery. The Democratic-led Congress heard this call and immediately went to work passing legislation to help Americans get back on their feet. Legislation that extended unemployment benefits for millions of Americans across the nation and in my home state of Florida, which has one of the highest rates of unemployment at 12 percent. Legislation that created and saved 320,000 jobs for teachers, police officers, and firefighters. Legislation to reform Wall Street to protect consumers. And, legislation to reform our nation's health care system to ensure that access to affordable, quality health care is not simply a privilege for some, but a guaranteed right for all. Each and every one of these laws have helped Americans through difficult times and we are beginning to see the fruit of all of these efforts.

"Much was accomplished in the 111th Congress, but too many Americans remain unemployed and continue to struggle. Now more than ever, it is imperative that we come together, and work together, to move America forward. Now is not the time to return to failed policies of the previous administration. It is time to get serious about job creation. As Co-Chairman of the Democratic Caucus' Jobs Task Force, I am committed to doing just that.

"I welcome the President's call for increasing our nation's competitiveness. I agree with him that, in order to spur job creation and for our long-term recovery, it is critical that America remain competitive in the global market. To do this, we must also ensure that everyone has access to a quality and affordable education. Now is not the time to enact policies that hinder students' options and access to post-secondary education.

"I agree with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle that we need to get serious about government spending and our country's deficit. But we must address this issue in its entirety and stop the political nonsense. The 'YouCut' project is a prime example of the Republicans' diversionary tactics. Additionally, if these programs were to be cut, they would not even make a dent in the deficit compared to a five-percent cut of military spending, which I support.

"As a nation, we must keep moving forward. It is time that we tone down the rhetoric and get down to the business of the American people."

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings represents Florida's 23rd Congressional district. He is a senior member of the House Rules Committee and Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

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